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Mr. CALDWELL's SERMON on the Trial of  
the Spirit operating in this Part of the World.

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If Persons examine with Impartiality, the Work now in  
*Scotland*, and compare it with the Work in *New-England*, they  
will find they run parallel to one another. Mr. *Whitefield's* Ser-  
mon, entitled, *The Balm of Gilead*. p. 10.

They depend much upon their Authority, to prove the Facts  
of *A. M's* Letter; and I desire no other Authority than these  
very eminent Ministers Sermons out of which the Extracts are  
taken, to prove that the Work lately begun and carried on in  
*New-England*, is not *Enthusiasm* and *Delusion*, but a great and  
marvellous Work of the Spirit of God. *Whitefield's Remarks*  
on the State of Religion, p. 16.

In this whole Argument, we suppose the Truth of CHRISTIA-  
NITY, and take it for granted that Men believe their Bibles: And  
therefore, upon this Supposition, it seems necessary, that who-  
ever wou'd disprove this Work, must shew that the Account  
which the Subjects thereof give of the inward Working of their  
Minds, and its Effect upon their Lives,-----are not according to  
the Law and the Testimony, nor agreeable to the Workings and  
Effects of the Spirit of God therein represented; Or that this  
Work is attended with certain Symptoms and Circumstances,  
which make it impossible that it can come from God; --- Or that  
the Evidence, upon which the Truth of the Facts is founded, is  
not such as the Nature of the Thing requires,--- and cannot be  
depended on.--- Mr. *Webster's* Divine Influence the true Spring  
of the extraordinary Work at *Cambuslang*, &c. p. 44.

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*An impartial Trial of the Spirit operating in this  
Part of the World; by comparing the Nature,  
Effects and Evidences of the present supposed  
Conversion, with the Word of God.*

---

A

*J. Mayd. 1814*

# S E R M O N

PREACHED AT

*New London-derry.*

OCTOBER 14th, 1741.

On 1 JOHN iv. 1.

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By JOHN CALDWELL, A.M. \*

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Published at the Desire of the OLD CONGREGATION in the said  
TOWN.

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PROVERBS xxx. 12.

*There is a Generation that are pure in their own Eyes, and  
yet are not cleansed from their Filthiness.*

*Luke xii. 35. Take heed therefore, that the Light which is  
in thee be not Darkness.*

*1 Theff. v. 21. Prove all Things; hold fast that which is  
Good.*

*Luke xvi. 15. Ye are they which justify yourselves, but God,  
knoweth your Hearts: For that which is highly esteemed among  
Men, is an Abomination in the Sight of God.*

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B O S T O N

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# T H E P U B L I S H E R

To the READER.

THE Design of Reprinting the following Sermon, is to prevent People from taking up with a superficial Religion, that rests upon the Fervours of Imagination; which, we have too much Reason to believe, not a few are doing here, after the Example of those in *New England*: Nor is it surprising, that the most ignorant and corrupt among the Multitude should be fond of a Scheme, which has a Tendency to weaken the immutable Obligations to Holiness, which reconciles the hidden Vices of the Heart with the most solemn and noisy Profession: A Scheme, which seems to encourage the highest Presumption, under the Pretence of resting upon the Righteousness of Christ, and blows up some with such a high Conceit of themselves, that they talk as if they were the only Favourites of Heaven; and that every one who has sober Piety and Knowledge of Religion enough, to disapprove their Way of Proceeding, are Strangers to Jesus Christ, and Blasphemers against the Holy Ghost; tho' the Persons they take such Liberties with, are as exemplary in their Lives, as any of them, or their Converts, can pretend to be.

We have some shocking Things of this Kind in *Edwards's* Sermon on *the distinguishing Marks of the Spirit*, and in a Letter that an anonymous Writer ascribes to the Reverend Mr. *Webster*, one of the Ministers of *Edinburgh*, p. 10, 39, 47, 49, &c.

By

By the following Sermon, the Reader may see the childish Mistake on which the Reasoning of the Writer in the *Weekly History*, against the *State of Religion in New England*, chiefly depends. That Writer, without Foundation, takes it for granted, that the Editor intended to make the Reverend Dr. *Colman*, *Parsons*, &c. pass for Men who had a bad Opinion of Mr. *Whitefield*, and the Conversions supposed to be made by him, when he and his Friends had been at the greatest Pains to fill all Quarters of the Country, with Sermons, Letters, &c. in Praise of himself and his Work, tho' generally, of an older Date than the Sermons from which the Extracts were taken.

It would seem by this Discourse, that the Author of it had never any favourable Opinion of this *New-light Scheme*, as they call it in *America*, on which Account, the Printer of *The State of Religion in New England*, took little from him, thinking he had Abundance from Mr. *Whitefield's* known Friends, who cannot be supposed to say any thing against Mr. *Whitefield*, or of the bad Tendency and Consequences of his Work, but what Truth extorts from them.

I know nothing in this Sermon itself, that needs any Apology: The long Recital of different Opinions, will have the greater Propriety, if the Reader keeps in view, that the *Methodists* are divided among themselves, and are generally great Latitudinarians, where Latitudinarianism is consistent with Popularity. Mr. *Westly*, the Father of the Sect, is a zealous Arminian High-Churchman; who stuffs his Discourses with Denunciations of Hell-fire and Damnation against Presbyterians, and other Dissenters from the Church of *England*, unless they fall in with his Scheme\*. Mr. *Whitefield* was a cordial Friend of this Gentleman and his Pupil, till his Ambition, Vanity and Avarice, as some say, mov'd him to set up for himself. Mr. *Westly* had occupied the Friends of *Arminianism* and *High-Church*: Mr. *Whitefield* found it wou'd be his Interest to make his Court to Calvinists and Dissenters, and offer'd to preach for many Dissenters in *England*, who rejected him; among others, for Mr. *Bradbury*. Many Papers, in the *London* Edition of Mr. *Whitefield's Weekly History*, are taken up in exposing Mr. *Westly*, and his Converts, in publishing his Errors, and their Delusions, in order to render him

unpo-

\* See the *History of the Colony of Georgia*, p. 41.

unpopular: Some of Mr. *Westly's* Disciples took Part with Mr. *Whitefield*, and join'd with him in the Attack; among whom were Mr. *Howel Harris* and Mr. *Cennick*. The following is an Extract of a Letter from Mr. *Harris* to Mr. *Cennick*, in that *Weekly History*, Numb. 13. "This Week, Brother *Seward* has been here, and tells me of his dividing with Brother *Charles*: [*Westly*] He seems clear in his Conviction, that God would have him do so. I have been long waiting, to see if Brother *John* and *Charles* should receive further Light, or be silent, and not oppose *Election* and *Perseverance*; but, finding no Hope thereof, I begin to be stagger'd about him, what to do. I plainly see, that we preach two Gospels, one sets all on God, the other on Man; the one, on God's Will; the other, on Man's Will; the one, on God's choosing; the other, on Man's choosing; the one, on God's distinguishing Love, making one to differ from another; the other, on [one] Man's being better than another, and taking more Pains, and being a better Husband of his Grace than another, more passive under the Hand of the Spirit than another; and if both should come to Heaven, they could not harmonize in Praises."

Tho' it appears from this Passage, that this Mr. *Harris* mistakes both *Calvinism* and *Arminianism*; yet it proves that the Party is divided on these Points. We have a Letter of Mr. *Whitefield's*, in which he endeavours to expose Mr. *Westly*, by discovering to the Public the high spiritual Pride and Self-deceit of his Converts; It runs thus: "My dear Friend and Brother, God was with me at *Newbury*; he is also with me at *Bristol*. The People receive me with much Love, and we have seen his Power in the great Congregation.--- Dear Brother *Cennick* is more and more rash: He has lately printed some very bad Hymns. To-day I talk'd with Brother *N-----*. He tells me, that for these three Months last past, he has neither sinn'd in Thought, Word, or Deed. He says, he is not only free from the Power, but the very In-being of Sin. He now says, it is impossible for him to sin. I asked him, suppose he should? He said, if such a thing was possible, by that he should forfeit all he had receiv'd. So that it is plain he depends upon acquir'd Grace within, and not upon the Righteousness of Christ without. I took particular Notice of what he said, because Brother *Westly* told me, he was really a new Creature. I find he has but a very mean Opinion of *David*: And he told me,



“ that St. Paul was not a new Creature when he wrote his Epistle to the *Philippians*. I ask’d him if ever he was? He said, “ Yes, when he wrote these Words, *I have fought the good Fight.*

“ I talk’d with three Women, one said she had been perfect these twelve Months; but, alas! show’d many Marks of very great Imperfection whilst I was with her. I ask’d her, if she had any Pride? She said, No. I ask’d if ever she ask’d Pardon at Night for her Sins or Infirmities? She said, No, for she did not commit any Sin. I spoke to another Woman, who said she had not sinn’d in Thought, Word or Deed this Twelve-month. I ask’d her, and every one of the rest, whether ever they us’d the Lord’s Prayer? They were unwilling to answer, but afterwards said, Yes. I ask’d them, whether they us’d it for themselves, and could say, *Forgive us our Trespases?* They said, No, they us’d it for others only. Another said, Jesus Christ could not sin, and therefore she could not; for every one that is perfect, said she, must be as his Master. Thus, my dear Brother, they go on to pervert Scripture. I find them very ignorant, but, poor Souls! well meaning. However, such Errors are very dangerous, yet Brother *Westly* propagates them with all his Might. I know you will pray for him. Brother *Humphreys* is convinc’d more and more every Day. He begins to see clearly, and enjoys much Freedom in his Soul. God is pleas’d much to sweeten and comfort my Heart. If you please you may publish the Contents of this, and forget not to pray for

*Yours most affectionately*  
*in Jesus Christ,*

G. WHITEFIELD.

April 25th, 1740.

It is plain, from his permitting the Printing of this Letter, that he form’d the Design of exposing Mr. *Westly*, and such as he thought would adhere to him; for none of those Kind of Things were new to himself: Brother *Cennick*, afterwards favoured Mr. *Whitefield*, and in November, 1740. his very bad Hymns were commonly sung by the Reverend Mr. *Whitefield*. See the same Weekly History, Numb. 9. this Mr. *Humphreys*, whom Mr. *Whitefield* here mentions, we find, in a Letter, dated Twelve Months after, talking boldly of his Assurance, in Mr. *Whitefield*’s own Strain. ---- “ I am comfortably persuaded, that “ I have felt a vital Union with Jesus Christ, the Son of the Most

## *The Publisher to the Reader.*

Most High God, and the Saviour of Sinners. This I also steadfastly believe, that when a Soul is united to Christ, there is no Possibility of a future, final Separation. This very Consideration has been the Means of enlightning me to see, that, if I have been once truly justified, I have then a certain Interest in Christ; I am born of God, I am washed in the Blood of Jesus, I stand in him, and I am clothed in his perfect Righteousness. Hence, by Experience, I learn, that Text, 1 *John*, iii. 9. *Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit Sin*, is not to be understood of a sinless Perfection, &c."

Whoever wants to see more of the Enthusiasm of the *Methodists*, and the Discords raised among them, by Mr. *Whitefield*, and his Adherents, may consult Mr. *Whitefield's Weekly-History*, the *London* Edition; I shall trouble the Reader with no more of that Kind here, but an Extract of a Letter from Mr. *Humphreys* to the Reverend Mr. *John Westly*, Number 11. "Reverend Sir, I think I heard you without Prejudice last Night; but, indeed, many Things you spoke concerning *David*, troubled me much. You enlarged exceedingly upon his Faults; but mentioned hardly any thing of his Graces or Virtues. If any one that had never heard of *David* before, had heard you last Night, they would have thought him a wicked Villain: For my own Part, I never heard such a Character before, except it was in Doctor *Morgan*, the Deist's Book, called *The Moral Philosopher*. The chief Difference, I think, between your Description of *David*, and his, is this: You allow that *David* might be saved at last, and *Morgan*, in the Conclusion of his Character, says, *Away with him to the Devil, from whence he came.*" ---- April 10. 1741.

Never was there a Man more inconsistent than Mr. *Whitefield*: We find him, sometimes, giving himself the Airs of a furious Bigot, pronouncing Damnation on all who don't enter into his Antinomian and misrepresented Calvinism; On another Occasion, he recommends Charity to all Denominations of Christians and Men: It is true, he has made a Sort of Recantation, and affects a wonderful Ignorance of what was contained in the Extract recommended by him, as containing the Sentiments of his Heart: The Book is, Mr. *Law's Appeal to Infidels*, &c. And, he says, he had read it: If so, it is hardly possible his Recantation can be sincere; because, there is not, perhaps, one of tolerable Understanding in the Nation, who, after having read the Whole, would have taken the

the Extract in the Sense he pretends to take it, in his sham Recantation : But we have Abundance of Proofs from his *Weekly-History*, that People may be of any Sect, and continue such, and be reckoned among the Number of his Converts. See a Letter from the Reverend Mr. Muirhead, in *Boston*, to his Friend in *Glasgow* *Weekly-History*, Number 26. *London* Edition. ---- “The Work  
 “ still goes on, nor does it stand here : Numbers of Congrega-  
 “ tions through the Country, sensibly feel the Power of God  
 “ only, where they have dead Arminian Time-Servers, with  
 “ them there is nothing of this Matter. We have severa  
 “ such here ; void of Success, Opposers, who brand the Illumi-  
 “ nations of God’s Spirit, with the Names of Enthusiasm and  
 “ Phrenzy ; No convicted Person remains under the Ministry o  
 “ such. God is now separating the Chaff from the Wheat  
 “ here are young and old, middle-aged, *Papists*, *Episcopalians*  
 “ *Quakers*, and very young Children, with notorious Sinners  
 “ entering in at the Strait-gate, and they have had wonderfu  
 “ Discoveries of Love from God in Christ.” ---

The Writer of this Letter, does not pretend that those *Papists*, *Quakers*, &c. have changed their Professions ; and therefore, according to him, all those Professions are consistent with *Whitefieldism* ; and I can’t help observing by the by, that those he calls *Arminian Time-Servers*, may be further removed in their Sentiments, from *Arminianism*, than his *Papists* and *Quakers*, unless the first are *Jansenists*, and the latter differ from the general Sentiments of People of their Profession. We have had Letters from this Country, printed in the *Boston Gazette*, representing the Church of Scotland, (except a few that are Admirers of Mr. *Whitefield*,) as remaining dead and formal, as before, and without Success ; and therefore, we may conclude, that the Gentlemen he thus calls *Time-Servers*, are such as stand up for real Religion, as taught and exemplified in the blessed Jesus, and preserve their Integrity, in spite of popular Clamours.

I shall conclude, with one Extract more, instead of many from the *Weekly History*, Numb. 28. *London* Edition, being Part of a Letter from Mr. Howel Harris to Mr. Cennick, October 1741. ---- “ I discoursed, Sunday Morning, in the little Society of *Methodists*, went to Church, and received the Sacrament  
 “ ---- In the Evening, I went to Meeting to hear Mr. Philip  
 “ and was asked to preach there, in his Meeting at Six, and  
 “ did ; and, Monday Morning, in a *Baptist Meeting*, where,  
 “ hop

hope the Lord blessed me, to save my Soul from the Blood of all. ---- I would have preached in an *Arian Meeting-house*, but they, (poor Souls) would not let such a Madman." ----

We see by this Passage, that the *Whitefieldites* make their Court to *Baptists*, and *Arians* in *England*; at the same Time that Mr. *Whitefield* makes his Court to the stricter People in *Scotland*, by thundering out Damnation against them; nor does he rest here, but labours to throw Suspicions of *Heresy*, into the Minds of the Vulgar, against all who disapprove his *Methods*; such Conduct looks too like one disposed to make himself a wretched Tool, in the Hands of such as would substitute Bigotry, and uncharitable Hatreds, in the Room of true Christianity; and, for that Purpose, endeavour to blacken every one qualified and disposed to serve the real Interests of Christianity, to spread the Gospel in its Purity and Simplicity, and inculcate that Holiness in Heart and Life, without which no Man can see God.

Upon the Whole, if Mr. *Whitefield*, and his Friends, would give such as judge for themselves a good Opinion of their Temper and Spirit, they must show the World more of their Charity in their Lives and Conversations; Frothy Declamations, and poetical Descriptions, may amuse a credulous Multitude, but can only raise Indignation and Pity, in the thinking Part of Mankind, that know Things as they really are. To be taking Quack Methods in the ordinary Affairs of Life, is shocking; but, in the Matters of Religion, for Ministers, or others, to endeavour to build a Reputation upon the Ruins of the Reputation of the more worthy among their Brethren, and Fellow-Christians, is one of the worst Marks they could have given, of their being animated by the Spirit of Christ.

To put so far on a Level with Christ Jesus, a weak Man, whose Vices are certain, and Conversion doubted by many, as to charge those who oppose him, with as great Guilt as if they had opposed Christ in the Flesh, favours more of human Passion, and spiritual Insolence, than of Solid Knowledge, or Christian Charity. To throw out such Expressions, is to sow the Seeds of the most fatal Discords. 'Tis but a weak Proof of the Divinity of a Work, that it meets with Opposition. Good Men will always oppose what they see destructive to their Fellow-Creatures; and the Wicked themselves, do not always prove a Work to be good, by their opposing it: They are often found opposing bad



bad Things, which their particular Passions do not lead them to.

Let not People think Men Friends or Enemies to a real Work of God, according as they are Favourers or Opposers of Mr. *Whitefield* and his Way. All who endeavour, in their Sphere, to promote the Knowledge and Love of God and our Neighbour, are Friends of that Work of God, which Jesus Christ came into the World to promote.

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# P R E F A C E.

**A**S this Sermon appears under the Disadvantage of opposing fashionable Principles in Religion, on account of the Motives that influenced me now to publish the same, it will not, I hope be unacceptable.

'Tis well known, that several Ministers and many People have lately fallen into the Extravagances about Conversion and the Divine Spirit mentioned in this Sermon. judging and condemning others as carnal, and Resisters of the Spirit: To prevent the People where I have sometime preached, from blindly running into such Things, because fashionable, I first composed this Discourse, without any Design of appearing in this publick Manner before the World; the Occasion of which was a Sermon preached at Londonderry by Mr. McGrege upon the same Subject with this, and as was reported. intended as an Answer to it; Notes hereof being carried to him by a Preacher, who heard me deliver the same. I cannot forbear making a few Observations upon what was delivered with as great Authority by him, as if he had been inspired. His Method was the same I had used; and when he came to the fourth Head, instead of denying any thing discharged upon the present Scheme, he proposed to try, first, the Spirit of the Promoters, and then the Spirit of the Opposers of the same. The former he tried by their Doctrine, Practice, Labour and Effects, Their Doctrines he called Orthodox, mentioning the distinguishing Doctrines of Calvin, and a few others that Papists generally as well as Protestants believe; making Messieurs the † Erskines, Tennants, Whitefield, &c. all of

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† It is probable, Mr. Whitefield's giving out his Intimacy and Union of Sentiments with the Messieurs Erskines, may have contributed not a little to have made him acceptable to the stricter Presbyterians in New England, as the Fame of his friendly Correspondence with these Reverend Gentlemen render'd him more acceptable to the Populace of Scotland at first, than he would otherwise have been.

one Way of thinking, neglecting to join with them one of the most strenuous Friends and Founders of the Scheme, viz. \* Mr. Westly, on whose Ground, tho' Arminian, the same Fruits grow, or shew how weak our Forefathers were, in dissenting from the Church of England, who believe all his orthodox Principles. Their Practices he calls good, and Tempers mild, alledging for Proof the single (tho' false) Instance of Mr. Whitefield's immediately leaving and opposing Mr. Westly for his Errors; the contrary to which is universally known, their Correspondence and Brotherhood continuing long after he knew Mr. Westly's Opinions did oppose Calvinism. He pretends not to mention the Conduct for which such were excluded from the Churches of Scotland, England, Pennsylvania, &c. but remembering that Socinus was a good Man, he assures us, a good Practice is no Evidence that a Person believes the Truth. Their Labour and Zeal is, he assures us, very great; but observes not that the Romish Emissaries equal, if not exceed them in both. Success he calls sufficient Evidence of a Divine Mission; not considering that by this Way of Reasoning, Mahomet had such a Mission. Nay just thus do Mahometans reason: Solimus's destroying his Father was a good Action, because he succeeded in his Villany; but Bajaret's attempting to depose his Brother was a base Action, because he did not succeed. The Effects of their preaching, in reforming Men, none can, he supposes, have the Front to deny, tho' he knows many have denied the same, and I think undeniably proved their Reformation is but from one Vice to another, from a State of Christian Sobriety and Charity, to spiritual Pride and Uncharitableness. The Spirit of the Opposers he tried by their Doctrine and Temper; the Doctrines of such he boldly called Arminianism, Pelagianism and Deism, except some few of the weaker Brethren, without any Proof. The Spirit of many of em is, he says, a lying Spirit: For Proof of which he mentions a few Things charged upon his Friends, that he attempted not to shew the Fallacy of.

Again, 'tis an uncharitable Spirit, without Proof; then 'tis an envious Spirit, supposing, with great Charity, that the Opposers

\* The same Kind of Screamings and Convulsions are frequent in Westly's Meetings. See his Character in the late History of the Colony of Georgia.

position many make to this great Stir, is occasioned by their Characters being eclipsed by some of his Friends. Again, 'tis a Mocking Spirit, and a prophane one, exemplified in Commissary Garden's Remarks upon Mr. Whitefield, of which I cannot judge, because I never saw them. Again, a partial Spirit, without Proof.

In his Application he address'd himself to the Enemies and Friends of this Work, and very metaphysically distinguishes the latter into Graceless, and such as had Grace: an uncommon Epithet indeed, God's graceless Friend! In the Confusion he sometimes tells us, Tears and Tremblings are Evidences of true Repentance; and again, that they are none, and joins God's gracious Children and Friends, not to call such as offered from them about the present Work, carnal and unregenerate, for this savoured not of the Wisdom which is from above, by which he proves Messieurs the Tennants; Whitefield, &c. to be void of heavenly Wisdom. In his Sermon he twice at least, challenged all his Opposers to deny any Thing he advanced; but when he was urged to reason in publick upon the same, refused absolutely, declaring the Pulpit and Press were free to his Opposers. This Freedom of the Press I was thereupon prevailed to take, as I am conscious of no Views I have in any Discourse but the Glory of God, and the establishing and confirming myself and others in the Truth, as 'tis in Jesus. I shall therefore be pleased to see my Errors discovered, and upon seeing any Error in this Discourse make a publick recantation; but I shall expect if any Gentleman shall attempt to shew me my Mistakes, that he will bring his Arguments from God's Word, that he will attempt to convince me by Reason, not Railery,

And if any Person shall make any Attempt of this kind, I shall think myself obliged in the Spirit of Meekness, either to own myself convinced, if I am; or give my Reasons why I am not. That this Discourse may be received for Truth so far only as 'tis true, is and ever shall be my earnest Desire and fervent Prayer to the God of all Truth.

J. C.

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## An impartial Trial of the Spirit, &c.

### I JOHN iv. i.

*Beloved, believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits whether they are of God: because many false Prophets are gone out into the World.*

**T**HAT Man is a Creature capable of reasoning, reflecting and enjoying Happiness, is evident from the least Acquaintance with the humane Soul.

That by Attention and a proper Use of his Faculties and Advantages, he is capable of avoiding being deceived in such Things as are necessary to his Being and Well-being, is plain from the least Reflection on the disinterested Goodness and perfect Happiness of his Author.

But all the noble Powers that Men are formed with, and Advantages they enjoy, without Attention and careful Improvement, will not secure them from being imposed upon, and proving instrumental to lead others, especially the more warm and sanguine, the less judicious and careless, into the same Imposition. 'Tis certain, that Men being of the lower Order of created Intelligences, are liable to err in Points of Speculation and complex Cases, after the most impartial Enquiry. But in such Things as are necessary to their Being and Well-being, to Holiness and Happiness, their Errors are criminal, and therefore by proper Application



plication of Mind avoidable ; otherwise we should be necessitated to commit Sin or moral Evil.

If then by a proper Improvement of our Powers and Advantages, we are capable of distinguishing Truth from Falshood, and Realities from Appearances, in such Things as are necessary to our present or future Happiness ; and if by Negligence, Inattention and Carelessness, we may be deceived ourselves, and prove the unhappy Instruments of leading others into very fatal Mistakes ; it seems evidently to be the Business of all Men to be careful and impartial in their Enquiries after Truth, especially religious Truths, lest they be deceived by Appearances, and in the Event embrace a Cloud instead of *Juno*.

And if this is a Duty, and what may reasonably be expected from Men at all Times, never was it more necessary than at this Day, when such Diversity of Sentiments about religious Principles prevail, and Men of contrary Principles equally pretend to the Direction of the Spirit, and are equally censorious and uncharitable to such as differ from 'em.

If there were false Prophets in the Apostles *John's* Days, if some Men pretended to the Spirit of God, who had it not, and if it was not only lawful, but commendable to try all Pretenders at that Time, and not implicitly believe all that Men capable of working Miracles, or foretelling future Events, taught as from God ; it may be hoped, that an impartial Enquiry into the Nature of the Spirit so much at present the Subject of Conversation, and stated publick Discourse in this Part of the World, will be candidly entertained, and without Prejudice attended to ; con-

sidering

Considering that so mighty a Stress is laid upon the having of it, and that Men teaching Doctrines as opposite as Light and Darkness, equally boast of it, and pretend to its Influences.

Let us therefore with Candour and Integrity, without Prejudice against Men or Principles, take the Apostle's Advice in my Text, and not *believe every Spirit, but try the Spirits*, &c. That my following Discourse may be useful to assist us in this Trial, I shall prosecute this easy Method, *viz.*

I. Shew, That there were of old, and still are false Prophets in the World, or Men who have alleged they were, and do pretend to be influenced by the Divine Spirit, in teaching Doctrines and performing Actions, without having any Ground or such Pretences, but were either themselves deceived, or intended to deceive others.

II. That there is a certain Rule, to which if Men impartially attend, they may judge with sufficient Certainty, whether a Person pretending to be influenced by the Divine Spirit, in teaching Doctrines and performing Actions, be really influenced thereby or not; and what it is.

III. The Importance of being impartial in attending to, and trying all Pretenders by this Rule.

IV. Bring the Spirit so much boasted of in this Part of the World at present, to this Rule, and try it thereby; and as it agrees with, or differs from this Rule, approve and receive, or condemn and reject the same.

V. Conclude with some Inferences or Corollaries from what shall be said.

I. I am to shew, that there were of old, and still are false Prophets in the World, or Men who have

have alledged they were, and do pretend to be influenced by the Divine Spirit, in teaching Doctrines and performing Actions, without having any Ground for such Pretences, but were either themselves deceived, or intended to deceive others. The Argument used by the Apostle in my Text, to perswade Men not to believe whatever Persons pretending to the Spirit of God teach but try them, is because *many false Prophets are gone out into the World.*

By a Prophet we are to understand sometimes one who foretells future Events, some considerable Time before they come to pass; and sometimes Teachers who assert, that they have a Divine Warrant for all they do and teach. That there have been, and still are Persons in the World, who were only Pretenders in these Things (and consequently Caution becomes such as would not willingly be deceived) is evident from an innumerable Variety of Instances. How many false Prophets were there among the *Jews* who prophesied Lies to the People, speaking Peace unto them without Foundation? In the Days of *Abab* how many false Prophets were there, and one only that had the Skill and Courage to speak the Truth, for which he met with evil Treatment from one of the King's Officers, the rest being deceived by a lying Spirit from the Lord, as the Scriptures phrase it. Yea, Persons to whom God sometimes spake, and who pretended a great Regard to the most High, at other Times taught the most immoral Practices; yea and pretended to be inspired when they were not as the History of the old Prophet at *Bethel*, and *Balaam* proves. Let me take a little Notice of

The History of these two Persons, for Illustration of this, and sure you will see that 'tis hazarding Truth and Righteousness to believe implicitly all that Persons pretending to Inspiration, or sometimes really illuminated, teach us at all Times. *Balaam*, it must be allowed, when called by *Balak* to curse the Children of *Israel*, and importuned by the Prospect of great Riches, behaved like a Man that had a more than common Regard for the Deity; nor would he bless or curse but as God ordered him; no, tho' he would have given him his House full of Silver and Gold. The History also informs us, *He was a Prophet, that God spake to him in Dreams, by an Angel, and by particular Impulses at the Time of his offering Sacrifice*; as you may see at large, *Numb. xxii, xxiii, xxiv* Chapters. Yet after all, 'twas most unsafe to depend upon him implicitly as a Guide, in Practice, because he taught very immoral Doctrines, and laid a more effectual Scheme to bring down the Wrath of God upon *Israel*, than all his Cursings could possibly do: He taught *Balak* to send forth the most beautiful Women among 'em, to tempt *Israel* into Adultery and Idolatry, a stumbling Block indeed! that according to his evil Design, succeeded and brought down the Anger of God upon 'em, as we have it, *Numb. xxv. 1, 2, 3, 4*. 'Tis true, the History does not inform us, that *Balaam* taught any such wicked Scheme to *Balak*, but *John* charges him directly with it, *Rev. ii. 15. Thou hast them that hold the Doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling Block before the Children of Israel, to eat Things offered to Idols, and commit Fornication*. Thus does a Person sometimes for worldly Views teach the



most immoral Practices, who at other Times seems to regard God more than the World, and one too to whom God spake by an Angel, &c. To the same Purpose *Nehemiah* informs us, that the Prophet was hired to prophesy Lies to him to put him in Fear, *Neh. vi. 12.* The History of the old Prophet at *Bethel*, as 'tis recorded in *1 Kings xiii*th Chapter, is a full and undeniable Proof how a Person to whom God speaks at some Time may pretend at another to have the Divine Warrant for what he does and says, when he has not. The History is to this Purpose: A young Prophet by the Appointment of God, comes from *Judah* to *Bethel*, where *Jeroboam* had erected an Altar, with a golden Calf for the People to worship, to prevent their going up to *Jerusalem*, the Place of Divine Appointment, lest they should own *Rehoboam* for their King, and prophesies against that Altar and the Priests belonging to it, having a Command after he had done so, to return by a different Way, nor stay to eat Bread or drink Water. His Prophecy, the Treatment he met with, and his Departure was told to an old Prophet that lived there, by his Sons, who were Witnesses to what he said and did; upon which he follows the Prophet, and overtaking him, assures him an Angel had spoke to him, and given him Command to bring the young Prophet to his House, and set Bread and Water before him, but 'twas a Lie. Here then is a Person who spake at sometimes by the Word of the Lord, as at the 20th, 21st, 22d Verses of that Chapter; and yet at other Times he pretends an Angel spake to him, when 'twas false. If then the old Prophet at *Bethel* did pretend to have the Divine Spirit when



when he had it not, any other may make the same Pretence; and if it was criminal, as the Event proved, to believe implicitly what he taught, so 'twill to believe others, especially when we are uncertain if ever God spake to them.

To what Purpose should we be enjoined to the *Trial of Things*; and *hold by what is good*, if there were not Teachers of Errors or false Doctrines in the World? Why should we be exhorted to try *such as pretended to the Spirit*, if there were not false Prophets among Men? Why should we be told, that *in the last Days Men should not endure sound Doctrine, but multiply to themselves Teachers according to their Humours*, but to make us careful to distinguish between Pretenders and real Teachers? And is it not to excite our Caution, to examine all that is taught us, that we are told there will arise false *deluding, fawning, hypocritical Teachers*, that if 'twere possible will deceive the very *Elect*? And in the Days of immediate Inspiration, when one or more prophesied, *i. e.* taught, the rest judged: In the very Days of the Apostles, some were for blending Judaism and Christianity together, and some alledged the Resurrection was past already. The *Antinomian* Principles also, so very common in our Days, then took their Rise, and gave Occasion to a very considerable Part of *James's* Epistle, to refute that most absurd and dangerous Principle, which strikes at the Foundation of all Religion, by encouraging Wickedness and Prophanity.

Will ye not allow the foolish Legends among the *Romans* are false, tho' the Authors pretended Illumination from God, and Teachers of pretended Infallibility among them confirm them? Is there

any

any now hearing me, but will own *Mahomet* was an Impostor, tho' he pretended to teach nothing but by immediate Influence of the divine Spirit and was generally convulsed, (*as he reported by the Spirit*) before he communicated any new Thing? How great also was his Success; and how numerous his Followers even unto this Day? How ready are Men at all Times to run into a Scheme pleasing to Flesh and Blood, and that renders the Way to God's Favour easy? Nay, who so little acquainted with the World, and the History of the Christian Church, as not to know that there have been false Teachers among them? Whilst some assert our Saviour is equal in all Perfections with his Father, others alledge he is no more than the noblest of created Intelligences; and some that he had no Existence until his Conception in and Birth of the Virgin Mother, and some, that he is no more than an Attribute of the Father. Most of which Opinions must necessarily be false, and consequently their Abettors false Teachers. Whilst some hold an Infallibility in Councils or particular Men; others maintain the Right of private Judgment, because all Men, they suppose, are fallible, and accountable for themselves to God. Some teach the Doctrines of unconditionate Election and Reprobation, the Imputation of *Adam's* first Sin to all his Posterity, so as to be a just Ground for the eternal Damnation of all Men, &c. And others as flatly deny all these. Some account for the Original of moral Evil by Fatality, others endeavour to reconcile certain Prescience, and humane Liberty, and others deny certain Prescience in all such Things as depend upon Liberty. Yea, have we not in

our Days false Doctrines taught, and palmed upon the Spirit? Are there not some teaching the Doctrines of *Calvin*, declaring the divine Spirit is their Director and Guide? And are there not others, (as for Instance, *the dear Mr. Westly*, so well acquainted with the divine Life, as he is characterised) preaching the directly opposite Opinions, and pretending to be guided by the same Spirit? Now is it not certain, that both these Doctrines cannot be from God? For tho' there are Diversities of Gifts and the same Spirit, yet are there not contrary Ones from the divine Spirit? Whilst some judge of the Truth of their Conversion, by sudden Fears and peculiar Warmths of their Devotion, alledging they can have as strong Evidences that they and others are in a State of Grace, as of any thing that comes under the Cognizance of Sense; others suppose that a religious and godly Life is the only sure Way of judging in those Cases; and yet the Evidence can amount to no more than a moral Certainty. How evident is it, that there have been and still are false Prophets in the World?

II. I am to shew, that there is a Rule, by impartially attending to which, Men may judge with sufficient Certainty, whether a Person pretending to be influenced by the divine Spirit, in teaching Doctrines, or performing Actions, be really influenced thereby or not; and what it is. As we are Creatures accountable to God for our Actions, 'tis certain, since God is infinitely holy, just and good, that we must in some Measure be capable of discovering what Course of Life, and what Actions he approves of or condemns. Our first

first Parents in the State of Innocency, were by attending carefully and unprejudicedly to the Light of Nature, capable of discovering their Duty to God, and the Nature of relative Duties; this was to them a Rule, and a certain one. But when the Powers and Faculties of the humane Soul were by Sin depraved and vitiated, and this Light became very dim, God of his infinite Goodness was pleased to give Men a clear and perfect Discovery of Duty and Sin, what Actions he will approve of, and what he will condemn; which Truths, tho' delivered by divers Persons, and in different Ages of the World, we have the faithful, clear, and perfect Records of, in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, *to which we would do well to attend, as unto a Light shining in a dark Place; for 'tis able to perfect the humane Mind in every good Word and Work, and make the Man of God wise unto Salvation.* Its true Usefulness the Apostle Paul gives us, *2 Tim. iii. 16. For Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction and Instruction in Righteousness;* and the Ground of our depending upon the same is, *'tis given by Inspiration; holy Men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost:* This is the Psalmist's perfect Love, *which is the very Truth, converts the Heart, and makes wise the Simple, Psal. xix. 7.* Yea, so perfect is it, that we need no new Revelations or Visions; and whosoever preaches contrary thereunto, we are not *to wish them God speed; we are to shun him, even if he were an Angel from Heaven, or contradict Paul's Advice, Gal. i. 8.* This is to be our Rule in Matters of Religion. And indeed where else should we go for one, since 'tis certain, *that no Man knoweth the Things of God,*

but



by the Spirit of God; no Man hath ascended up to Heaven, but he that came down from Heaven, even the Son of Man which is in Heaven. To the Law and to the Testimony we are to bring all Pretenders, and there try them.

But let us be careful in comparing Doctrines and Practices with the Word of God, that we be not determined in favour of them, before we try them by this unerring Standard of Truth and Orthodoxy; or resolved they shall not be contained in the Scriptures: Let us be impartial and unprejudiced, be ready to embrace a Doctrine as true, what we have been taught is false; and reject as false, what we have been taught is true, as soon as the Scriptures of Truth, impartially examined, prove the one or other to be so. This naturally leads me,—

III. To shew the Importance of trying all Pretenders by this Rule, with the most Impartiality. In Points of Speculation, that by their Truth or Falseness are of small or no Advantage or Prejudice to us, Impartiality is not of such Importance. But if we will judge of the Value or Importance of Truths by their Usefulness or Hurtfulness, and allow that whatever is the Nature of the religious Principle in reality believed, such will the Affections of our Minds and Practices be; nothing can be of more Importance, nor equally for our Interest, as the having just Notions of Religion; especially in such Truths as tend to form our Minds to Holiness or Sin: Because the avoiding Sin in all its Appearances, and living soberly, righteously and godly, is made necessary to our Acceptance with God.

Now

Now 'tis certain, that Impartiality in our Enquiries after Truth, is necessary to the Attainment of the same in a virtuous Manner. True indeed, it is, that Men may by the Benefit of a good Education and impartial Predecessors, know Truth with little or no Examination, and practise thereupon so as to obtain the divine Favour. If this were not the Case, how few could hope for the divine Favour? For how few are impartial in their Enquiries? But does not every one know, that such might believe Errors as well as Truth? That their believing Truth is purely accidental, and for any thing they know, their supposed Truths are Errors? Had such Persons been born at *Rome*, they would have been *Papists*; if at *Constantinople*, *Musselmén*; if at *Jerusalem*, *Jews*; if in *China*, Disciples of *Confucius*; and if in *Egypt* of old, they would have worshipped a *Calf*. There is therefore nothing approveable in believing Truth in this Manner. Enquiry is necessary to attain the Knowledge of Truth in an approveable Manner. But even Enquiry, if 'tis not impartial, will only tend perhaps to confirm Errors. Nor can any Enquiry but what is impartial, be called 'Enquiry after Truth, but Enquiry for Arguments to support a received Opinion. Suppose a Man who believes the peculiar Doctrines of *Arius* or *Socinus*, should pretend to try these Doctrines by the Scriptures. If he came with a Love to the Principle he believed true, wishing it might prove true; then would he restrain such Passages as seemed to oppose him, into his Favour. But could any Person call this, Enquiry after Truth? Surely, No. And is it not equally true in every Doctrine, when in reading

The Bible we are determined it shall or shall not be contained there? A Person reading the Bible ever so often with this Disposition of Mind, has no Hazard to attain the Knowledge of Truth.

A Temper of Soul open to Conviction, seeking Truth in the Love of it, is one of the most commendable Qualities a Man can possess. It argues a true Greatness of Soul, not to be tied down to the Belief of a Doctrine or Doctrines, because taught by this, or the other Man, or Number of Men. The Scriptures, which always judge according to Truth, give proper Encomiums and due Encouragement to this Temper of Mind: *Prove all Things; hold fast that which is good*, says Paul, *1 Thess. v. 21. i. e.* impartially examine all such Doctrines and Principles by the Word of God, as Men pretend to found thereon, and adhere to what is best founded upon the same. The wise Man tells us, *Prov. xiv. 15.* that credulous and unthinking Persons assent to Principles without Examination; but a Man who would avoid imposition, and receive Truth in the Love of it, is cautious what he receives for Truth, and sees proof before he assent. *The Simple believeth every Word, but the prudent Man looketh well to his going.* The Bereans have a good Character given them for their acting from this Temper, *Acts xvii.* *They were more noble than those of Thessalonica, because they received the Word of God with all readiness of Mind, i. e.* with unprejudiced Souls intended to Information; and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these Things were so, i. e. examined impartially whether the Doctrines of the apostles were agreeable to the written Word of

God or not We have a great Character also given to *Nathaniel* for this same Reason, by a perfectly wise and just Judge, *John* i. 45, 46, 47, 48, 49 *Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no Guile.* Our divine Redeemer gives him this glorious Character, for his laying aside Prejudice, Passion, and worldly Views, and coming, in opposition to his Prejudices against a *Nazarene*, upon *Philip's* rational and Christian Invitation, to satisfy himself of the Nature of our Saviour's Doctrine. This Conduct of the *Bereans*, &c. should also be ours in all our Enquiries after Truth more especially in Matters of Religion. We should not think a Doctrine true or false, because many have been of one Opinion, a few of another: For, if Numbers are to determine Truth the Heathen Idolatry will carry it; the *Mahometan* come in before the *Christian*, and the *Roman Catholick* before the *Protestant*. We should not like a Doctrine, because one Man, or Number of Men we esteem, looked upon the same as true; this would keep all Men in the Way of thinking they once are of, nor suffer any to be converted to Christianity, or from Popery, or any Error. No; let us when we go about to examine any Principle or Practice in Religion, tho' ever so contrary to our darling Tenets, what we have long believed Orthodox, or were told is so, suppose it for some Time equally true with their own, and go to the Bible, determined in Favour of no Opinion, and resolve to believe whatever appears to be taught there. This perhaps may appear difficult to many; but if we act not so, we can never hope to attain the Knowledge of Truth. 'Tis no doubt true, that after the most impartial Enquiry



Men may err: This is the Nature of all finite Reasonings. But surely there is more Virtue, at least, less Crime, in the Error of an unprejudiced Enquirer, (as he errs in Points of lesser Moment, and only in such does he err, if he endeavours to do as well as know the Will of God) than in the Orthodoxy of one who is only in the Right by Chance, or without Enquiry stumbles upon Truth. Every one must see that there is nothing approveable in believing Truth, any more than Error, without Examination, or by Chance. Nay, the Person sins by neglecting to encrease the Faculties God gave him to understand the Gospel. But the Man who is impartial in his Enquiries, acts a commendable Part. His employing his Powers in Endeavours after Truths in Religion, is virtuous or approveable; and if he errs, his Error is unavoidable, and therefore not sinful.

Suppose ye not, that if a Master should send forth two Servants in quest of something he had lost, if the one should search diligently, use all possible Means he could conceive of to find the same, but could not; and the other neglect all Enquiry, yet accidentally find what he should have sought for; suppose ye not that he would approve the former more than the latter? 'Tis not to be doubted: And will not *the Judge of all the Earth do what is right?*

Be pleased therefore with unprejudiced Hearts, with a Love to Truth, and a Willingness to find and embrace the same where ever it may appear, to attend me, whilst,

IV. I bring the present Spirit so much boasted of in this Part of the World, to the above Rule and unprejudicedly try the same thereby; and if it appears agreeable to, or different from the same, approve and receive, or condemn and reject it.

And here let me observe to you, that all professing Christianity must allow, that unless Sinners do so repent of their Sins as to forsake them and endeavour after a new Obedience in all Holiness and Purity, they can have no rational Foundation to hope that their Sins shall be pardoned or that they can be admitted into Heaven. Impenitent Workers of Iniquity have no Ground to hope for any thing better than a *fearful Indignation and Wrath, Woe, Tribulation and Anguish* for their future Portion.

'Tis also certain, that all true Penitents, all who so repent as to forsake and amend, will be accepted by God in Christ, as if they had never sinned: Their Sins will not be imputed to them; for by thus repenting, they do what is right. See how the Prophet *Ezekiel* expresses himself upon this Point, *Chap. xxxiii. 13, 14, 15, 16 Verses. The Righteousness of the Righteous shall not save him in the Day that he sinneth; nor the Sins of the Wicked condemn him when he repents of them; he shall not die, but live.*

It will also be allowed by all who fix Ideas to their Words, who use Words, not because they are common in the Part of the World they live in, or they have learned them like a Parrot, but because they understand them; that Conversion, when applied to Sinners, signifies the same Thing with true Repentance: For to be converted, according to

the original Meaning of the Phrase, signifies to be turned from something a Person was accustomed to believe or practise, to the opposite. Now, when this is applied to Sinners, it must signify the actual forsaking of Sin, and endeavouring to *perfect Holiness in the divine Fear.*

It will, I presume, also be allowed, that urging Sinners to Conversion, is one very great Part of a Minister's Business, and which by all proper Methods he should endeavour to promote. It also ought to be the main Concern of every humane Being, to endeavour to know themselves, to get acquainted with the Frame of their own souls, and upon what Footing they stand with God.

Nor is it to be denied, but that God by his Spirit, may communicate good Sentiments to the humane Soul, in a Manner suited to its Nature: For as God framed various Ranks of Creatures, 'tis to be supposed he treats them like what they are: Experience proves this; for upon inanimate Beings, he operates like Machines as they are: 'Tis therefore noways absurd to conclude, that the divine Spirit should operate upon the humane Mind, as a rational Mind can be worked upon; otherwise we should suppose God had framed Creatures, but had not reserved to himself a Power to treat them, or operate upon them like what they are.

These few Things being premised, I shall, with the greatest Caution, and a sincere Regard to Truth and Holiness, to the Glory of God and the Good of humane Souls, proceed to consider the Nature, Effects and Evidences of the present supposed Conversion in this Part of the World, that

that we may all be the better able to judge of the Nature of the Spirit from whence it flows.

To any Person, that with an unprejudiced Mind hath viewed the same for these six Months past, or more, I presume its Nature will appear to be this, or very near, *viz.* A sudden and terrible Fear of divine Wrath, or the Miseries of Hell, occasioning in some a Sensation of Cold in most a very extraordinary Warmth all over the Body; causing People to cry as if distracted to shed Tears in great Plentv; throwing many into Convulsions, and a few for some Time into Despair. This continues with the generality but for a very short Season, (tho' some few feel it a little longer.) In a few Days or less, the Cloud blows for ordinary, over; the Terror is at an End, and a more than common Chearfulness succeeds; all their Difficulties and Doubts are removed, and immediately a Certainty that all their Sins are pardoned, and that they shall be saved, takes place; and that all their after Sins, how many or heinous soever they be, will be overlooked, upon their confidently relying on the Merits of our Redeemer.

Its Effects, in general are, a bold talking of Experiences, as soon as the Terror is over; but which if we judge as we would in other Cases, we are to understand their Righteousness; tho' in the mean Time that they are filling our Ears with such Discourse, they would have us believe them the most humble and self-denied of Mankind; Contempt of all others, especially such as seem to question any thing of what they say of their Experiences; boldly calling such carnal, and sentencing them to eternal Misery, who demand



more Evidence than they think proper to give, to convince them their Spirit is from God; refusing to reason upon their Principles, telling the World none are capable to judge of their Doctrines or Experiences but Spiritual Men; *i. e.* such as are of their Opinions. Its Effects upon many of their Teachers are very uncommon, divesting them of all Charity to such as oppose, tho' ever so conscientiously, this present Scheme; moving them to shut the Gates of Heaven against the whole humane Race, but themselves and a few of their friends, whose Sins God will not be offended at, he will not approve the righteous and Christian behaviour of others: To despise or lightly esteem the great Duties of Morality, so clearly taught, so powerfully enforced, and declared by our Saviour, to be necessary Conditions of Salvation.

Some of them it moves to leave their own particular Congregations destitute of the Ordinances of Christ, and travel to and fro upon the Earth, inspiring People against their Pastors, who are not of their Stamp, by representing them as carnal and dead Men, who have no more Right to preach than the Devil; to declare that many Errors in Judgment, Delusions of the Devil, and direct Opposition to God's Word, are no Proof of Mens being guided by a wrong Spirit; to reproach people for not being affected with what they say, *i. e.* because they do not shed Tears, fall down into Convulsions, scream, and prevent others from being benefited; to declare such as oppose them are guilty of Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost; to neglect the Information of the Judgment, and apply to the Passions, especially Fear; almost constantly insisting upon Subjects of

Terror,

Terror, Hell and Damnation, with Pathos and moving Gestures; to declare such Things as God declares he will condemn Men for, may yet be found in God's own Children.

Its Effects upon People, are Censoriousness and Uncharitableness to such as differ from them in that Point; speaking evil of their Neighbours, despising a holy and religious Life in all but themselves; fancying they are obliged to persuade as many as they can, to despise and leave the Ministry of their Pastors, if not agreeable to them; pretending to God's peculiar Prerogative, *searching the Heart*; taking deluded Imaginations for heavenly Visions; fancying their Noise and Uncharitableness, Religion; preferring the Discourses of an ignorant Person among them, to the most judicious and learned of such as differ from them; becoming Teachers of others, praying in public, and some laying aside all Labour for the Support of themselves and Dependents.

The Evidences upon which the Certainty of their Conversion is founded, are their being able to point out the Time of their first Conviction; or remembering how some Expressions in a Sermon or Texts of Scripture, tho' not understood, filled them with Terror, caused them to weep, scream, or fall into epileptic-like Fits; thus finding by some unknown Cause, or Text of Scripture, or humane Expressions, or Imaginations called *Visions*; and attributed to the divine Spirit, this Uneasiness removed, and Chearfulness succeeded: From these and such like Things, they judge that their own, and the Conversion of others, are undoubtedly certain.

This I think a just Account of the Nature, Effects and Evidences of the present Conversion, when stripped of a Set of Phrases and Gestures, to which it owes no small Part of its Success. It spreads like an epidemical Distemper, catches at the Eyes, and by a kind of Sympathy, prevails over all Ages and Sexes, but especially the younger Women and Children.

Let me now take and compare this with the Rule of our Faith and Practice, that we may judge from what Spirit it springs. And here I would observe, That as God made Men reasonable Creatures, he treats them as such, nor requires them to believe any Thing but what he gives them sufficient Evidence to convince a rational Mind, is true. I would also take Notice of what is generally believed by all Christians, viz. That there are extraordinary and ordinary Communications of the Divine Spirit to the humane Mind; and these are capable of being proved by different Degrees and Kinds of Evidence.

The Apostles of our Lord had the Spirit in an extraordinary Manner, and for evidencing the same both to themselves and others, were enabled by God to work Miracles and foretel future Events, which according to the true Intent of the Prophecy came to pass. Their Doctrine had a holy and purifying Tendency; was perfectly reasonable, worthy of God to discover, and Man to receive; capable of being defended: They were willing also to reason with any Persons who differed from them, and convince Gainstayers; nor do we find them casting Names of Reproach upon such as were engaged in the common Cause, for Differences in Opinion. They also allow'd of

and approv'd an impartial Enquiry, and reasonable Methods to satisfy Men of their errors. If this be true, 'tis self-evident, the Spirit operating in this Part of the World at present, and appearing in such as call themselves Converted, is not the Spirit the Apostles had, because none of its Effects appear: For such as now boast of the Divine Spirit, cannot work Miracles, nor do they hope they fancy they can foretel future Events, tho' some of them have the Impudence (may not say Wickedness) to pretend to nothing less.

Nor is their Conversion rational, (and therefore not from the ordinary Motions of the Divine Spirit) as even the first Appearance of it plainly proves. More like a bodily Distemper, than a religious Conviction, causing People to look and act distractedly, to shed Tears, to disturb God's Worship by their Noise, and fall into paralytick, hysterick, or epileptick-like Convulsions and Spasms: That this is not acting like reasonable Creatures in Religion, is self-evident: Are they then supposeable to come from the Divine Spirit? Are not his Operations rational? Can any Thing else work in an irresistible Manner, but Argument and Reason upon a reasonable Subject? 'Tis certain the Spirit of God of old manifested itself in no such Way. Were the Apostles in any such extraordinary Disorders, or agitated by Convulsions at their first Conversion, or when they received the Holy Ghost? Or any of the Primitive Christians, tho' generally Idolaters before Conversion, among whom, if any where, such extraordinary Commotions might be expected? If they were, 'tis strange they never communicated any such Things to us, to be a Rule for After-ages.



adge by. 'Tis true, that several Persons were  
*struck to the Heart* : i. e. had Remorse of Con-  
science upon *Peter's* preaching that Jesus was the  
true Messiah, and shewing how barbarously he had  
been murdered ; but there appears no such extra-  
ordinary Commotions among them as in our  
Days, nor Confusion; the Jaylor and the Apostle  
*Paul* do also enquire, *what they shall do to be saved,*  
*or become acceptable to God* ; but they did not cre-  
ate a publick Disturbance, nor fall into Convul-  
sions, neither then nor afterwards, nor go away  
boasting of Experiences, and damning all that  
suffer'd from them about the *Modus* of Conver-  
sion. They did not fancy, as appears to us, that  
if they could but confidently believe that Christ  
died for their Sins, no more was necessary, their  
Sins were no Sins; nor would God be disoblighd  
with them for Sin: No; they enquir'd what were  
the Duties they owed to God and Man, and hav-  
ing obtained a rational and convincing Account,  
they were away resolved to comply with the same, and  
hoping for Salvation thereupon.

'Tis true, that such Things not being common  
in our Days, is no Argument but it may be just  
and good; but the like never having been in the  
Apostles, nor any other Age of the Church, is,  
methinks, a strong Presumption that 'tis not from  
the Divine Spirit; for in all his extraordinary  
out-pourings, he acts uniformly, awakening  
Men's Attentions, and convincing their Judg-  
ments by Miracles and Argument. Thus did the  
Spirit act in the Days of *Moses*, and our Saviour.  
Some, I know, are so weak as to fancy these two  
last Instances countenance the present Commo-  
tions, because there is Mention made of trem-

bling and falling down; but how careless such a  
 in reading the Scriptures, a brief View of the  
 Passages will convince us. The History of the  
 Jaylor's Conversion we have *Act. xvi* from the  
 23d to the 31st Verse. *And when they had laid  
 many Stripes upon them, they cast them into Prison  
 charging the Jaylor to keep them safely. Who hav-  
 ing received such a Charge, thrust them into the in-  
 ner Prison, and made their Feet fast in the Stocks.  
 And at Midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang  
 Praises unto God: and the Prisoners heard them.  
 And suddenly there was a great Earthquake, so that  
 the Foundations of the Prison were shaken: and im-  
 mediately all the Doors were opened, and every one's  
 Bands were loosed. And the Keeper of the Prison  
 awaking out of his Sleep, and seeing the Prison-door  
 open, he drew out his Sword, and would have kil-  
 led himself, supposing that the Prisoners had be-  
 fled. But Paul cried with a loud Voice, saying, Un-  
 do thyself no harm; for we are all here. Then he cal-  
 led for a Light, and sprang in, and came trembling  
 and fell down before Paul and Silas; and brought  
 them out, and said, Sirs, What must I do to be  
 saved? Now is there the least Evidence, (as extra-  
 ordinary a Case as this is) that his trembling  
 or falling down proceeded from the immediate  
 Operations of the Divine Spirit upon his Mind.  
 Is it not self-evident, that Fear of temporal Pun-  
 ishment, or Loss of Estate caused him to draw  
 his Sword to take away his own Life? And is it  
 not natural to conclude, that this Passion caused  
 the Trembling also? Here is a manifest Cause  
 which for an imaginary Cause we are not to give  
 up. 'Tis indeed true, that as soon as the Fear and  
 Terror was over, and he began to reflect, the Man*

icle awakned his Consideration, and brought him to examine the Religion *Paul* and *Silas* were persecuted for.

And is it not equally evident, that *Paul's* falling down was owing to the Miracle, and not to any Convictions of Sin, or Motions of the Divine spirit? For is it to be supposed, if these had been the Cause, that he would not have known whom he persecuted? Which 'tis plain he did not, as his History, *Acts ix.* informs us.

But alas! why should so great Strefs be laid upon shedding Tears, and convulsive Motions? Are these true Evidences of good Dispositions? Do they not spring from mechanical Causes? Are they not the Effect of a sudden Motion, of the Blood and Animal Spirits in Persons of abounding Fluids and weak Nerves? The aptness of Children and Women to weep more easily and in greater Abundance than grown Persons or Men, is a plain Proof of this; Anatomy convincing us, that their Fluids are more numerous in Proportion to their Solids, and their Nerves weak. Nay, does not the Impossibility of some Persons shedding Tears upon any Account, even tho' their Bodies were to be torn into ten Thousand Pieces, and universal Nature in a Conflagration around them, evidently prove these Things are constitutional? Some Persons being capable to shed Tears upon lesser Occasions, but upon more extraordinary ones having no Appearance of any, proves such Things no Evidences of extraordinary Awakenings, or good Dispositions. And will not the same hold good in Convulsions? Were you to see a *Roman Catholick* Priest after the Celebration of Mass upon some extraordinary Day, talk

in wild enthusiastick Strains, and at proper Periods hold up the Crucifix and Effigies of our Saviour, more crying would happen than at any the warmest Sermons ever preached in *New-England*. Are all such savingly wrought upon? Pray God the Lives of such as call themselves Converts, may not be of a Piece with their Afterlives. Nay, tho' our Souls and Bodies are so united that the Affections of our Minds operate mechanically upon our Bodies, and whatever raises the Passion may produce such Effects; yet is it not strange to say these Things prove nothing one Way or other? Is it not a strong Presumption, that the Spirit that deprives a Man of Sense and Reason, and unqualifies him for Instruction, is not, cannot be from God? Our Lord who had the *Spirit without Measure*, never so affected: 'Tis true, God's Spirit is not to be limited, but we know a wise Spirit will always act wisely and reasonably.

How conscious do the Abbettors of the present Scheme appear of the Irrationality of their Scheme by refusing to reason upon the same, branding all such as demand reasonable Evidence, with the Title of carnal Reasoners, unregenerate Persons &c? Nor will they allow any a Right to judge of the Truth of their Doctrines or Experiences, until they first are of their Way of thinking; as if they were conscious it could not recommend itself to a rational unprejudiced Enquirer. They would therefore unqualify all but themselves to judge in the Matter.

We must first suppose all they say true, and then look for Evidences; an ingenious Way to propagate Error, but such as Truth needs not



and would be ashamed of! Agreeable to this, the Sermons in general of the Heroes of this Scheme, as they are not fit, so neither are they intended to inform the Judgment; this is a Power the humane Mind they make light of, and them conscious is none of their Friends; 'tis to the Passions they apply, these they endeavour to rise, and look upon as the Springs of their Success. Now when the Passions are not under the Government of a well informed Judgment, but gratified without the Approbation of Conscience, they drive Men to all Follies; the Man is like a Ship at Sea in a Storm, without Helm, Captain, Compass, Sun or Stars; in such a Case sudden transports, strong Cryings, Convulsions and Floods of Tears are not strange.

Why should Men almost perpetually preach upon Subjects of Terror? Is there any Vertue, any Thing approveable in abstaining from all Evil, or doing good Actions purely for Fear of Punishment, or in hope of a Reward? No surely; for Animals may, by good or evil Treatment, be made to abstain from what is hurtful, and do what is useful: So Children by Rods and sweet Cakes may be restrained from some Actions, and influenced to others. Surely none will discover so much of the Animal or Child, as to fancy there is any thing approveable in such Actions of Animals or Children: And can the same Actions done by adult Persons, and proceeding from the same Principles, be approveable? Nay, when an Action is done partly from Love to God, or Benevolence, and partly from a selfish Principle, is not the Good of the Action increased or diminished, in exact Proportion as the one or other prevailed

vailed in the doing of it? Is it not very surprising therefore to hear Men almost perpetually turning upon this Hinge with Pathos, and moving Gestures, and yet fancy God's Spirit is at work among them, and his Work promoted thereby when God has declared 'tis his strange Work, and our Saviour used the same but seldom? Gesture and Pathos prove the Speaker or Actor to be earnest, but contain no Argument for Proof of any Thing he says; and to suppose it has any other Language, is Nonsense. The Spirit therefore that would perswade by Gestures and Pathos instead of Argument, that takes the contrary Way to promote Religion, than our Saviour did who had the Spirit above Measure that makes what God has declared his strange Work, their chief and only Work, using that for a Principle that should be used only as a secondary Motive, has a strong Presumption not to be from God.

Is a Minister's leaving the particular Society of Christians to which he was ordained as a Minister; destitute of Sermons, from the Divine Spirit? How different is it from the Apostolic Spirit, which enjoins Ministers *to take heed to themselves, and the Flock over which the Holy Ghost has made them Overseers*? Is this total Heed to, or Care of their Flocks, to leave them destitute of the Ordinances of Christ?

Is the going into other Christian Societies at the Desire of a few disaffected People, and increasing Divisions among the People of God, or between them and their Pastor, by representing him as carnal, dead, &c. from the Divine Spirit? Is it not as opposite as Light and Darkness to the Apostle's Advice just now mentioned, and the whole

Senior of the New Testament? We find *Paul* exhorting to mutual Love and Charity, such as maintained different Opinions, even tho' they were for mingling *Judaism* and *Christianity* together; exhorting Men not to *mind high Things*, but *condescend to Men of low Estate*, and in *Lowness of Mind* to esteem others better than themselves; and for Difference in Opinion, not to *judge or despise one another*. Read unprejudicedly the *xivth* Chapter of *Paul's* Epistle to the *Romans*, and *xiiiith* of his first Epistle to the *Corinthians*.

Is the peremptory asserting that an unconverted Minister has no more Right to preach than the Devil; that he cannot do good to his People, nor any more contribute to the Conversion of others, than a dead Man to the begetting a living Child, from the Divine Spirit? Is not this to make the Virtue and Efficacy of Ordinances depend upon the good or evil Dispositions of the Persons administering them? Nay, if an unconverted Minister has no more Right to preach than the Devil, he has no more to baptize; and I presume no Person would look upon himself as baptized at all, if the Devil was the Minister: Consequently, all baptized by unconverted Ministers are unbaptized; all baptized by the lately converted Ministers before their Conversion, they should re-baptize, as has lately been done in the third Precinct *Hadley*, to one brought up in the Church of *one*, and according to the Custom of the Church, re-baptized in Infancy: Yea, all Converts, both Ministers and People should be re-baptized, if they are not certain the Minister who baptized them was converted when he did so. Does not the putting this or some such-like Question, *Can*

*a dead Man beget a living Child? And, adding no more can an unconverted Minister do any good or convert his People; plainly confine the divine Goodness to the Operations of Men? yea, take the Power of Conversion absolutely out of God's Hand, and arrogantly and proudly confine it to the same, and all Goodness to a few conceited, passionate and uncharitable Men? Did the Apostles' Words, Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but it is God that giveth the Increase, never come into such Persons Thoughts? Were they never born home upon their Minds?*

Does not also the Scripture Notion of true Conversion, or Repentance, imply in it, Restitution to such as were injured by us? And is it not certain, that all Ministers, (according to the above Doctrine) who are converted some Time after Ordination, whether two, ten, or twenty Years, have robbed their People of one, or two, or three, &c. Hundred Pounds every Year of the unconverted Ministry? Ought they not then to restore the same? Can we judge them true Converts if they do not? To answer, they have not, would be very weak in other Robberies. Let them be content to live upon Necessaries, there are few, and easily purchased, and wear out what will cover Nakedness, and screen them from the Intemperance of the Weather, until they pay their Robberies.

What strange Notions must such have of the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, who can fancy that such as oppose them are either blind or guilty of it? When our Saviour charged the *Jews* with this Crime, the Case was this. They had seen him cast out Demons with such a benevolent



gn as convinced them he did it by the Power of the Holy Ghost; yet did they through Malice, attribute his Miracles to the Devil; acting against the Convictions of their own Minds, and with malicious Dispositions. Now will any of these Gentlemen alledge, that such as hear them preach, are in the Circumstances the *Jews* were in when our Saviour wrought this Miracle? Surely every good Man would hope they are not so vain: Can any Man hear them, but he must be blind, or convinced that they act from the Impulses of the divine Spirit? Nor oppose them but out of Malice to our Saviour, and the Cause of God? To say there is nothing wanting to constitute this Sin, (or Blasphemy we should say) but the not acting in opposition to Light, is as much as to say, Men are guilty of the most of that Sin, tho' they want the Whole.

Can that Spirit be from God, that leads Men to Contrarieties to God's Word? Then are Good and Evil meer empty Names, purely arbitrary. Was any Person ever so bold as to suppose, (until very lately) that such of the *Corinthians*, as at the Table of the Lord drank to Drunkenness, so as that many of them died thereby, or took their Father's Wives, were guided by God's Spirit? Or was it ever pretended by any but *Papists*, that Persecution, which is as opposite to Christianity, as Light to Darkness, or Good to Evil, was to be found in the Subjects of God's Kingdom. And as to judging and condemning of others as carnal, unregenerate and dead, for Matters in opinion, where God in his Word has not condemned them, or pretending to know Mens Hearts, 'tis usurping the divine Prerogative and dethron-

dethroning God; yea, doing what he has assured us he will condemn Men for. The Spirit therefore that leads Men to condemn others, and judges such the Children of God, yea, his dear Children, that habitually indulge themselves in such Practices as God assures us he will condemn Men for, is surely not the Spirit of God.

Can that Spirit be from God, that suffers Men to run into many false Doctrines and Errors, which he condemns them? Then may *Whitefield* and *Wesley* be both guided by God's Spirit, tho' they are solemnly contradicting one another; yea, *Papists* and *Mahometans*, for their Errors are more than many. That Spirit therefore that would make Contradictions true, and the divine Spirit the Author of many Errors, and yet Truth, is not, cannot be from God. Nor can that Spirit be from God, that would reconcile God and the Devil, or make Men Subjects of divine Operations and diabolical Delusions; unless it can be proved, that *Jannes* and *Jambres* were guided by God's Spirit, when they wrought the falsely-called *Miracles* in Egypt: For 'tis Nonsequens to reason from the Opposers of *Moses*, the Servant of the Lord, to God's supposed Servants; and conclude, because the Enemies of God are deluded by the Devil, that therefore his Friends may be deluded, and yet not deluded. That Spirit therefore that would reconcile God and the Devil, and suppose we can serve two Masters, is not, cannot be from God.

Nor can that Spirit be from God, that seeks not by Reason or godly Example, but by seeing others fall down, hearing them cry, and speaking unchar-

affure uncharitably. This is no Way to convince nor  
 there convert, and therefore not from God.  
 The leaving off all Labour and Industry for the  
 support of one's self and Dependents, is as op-  
 posite to *Paul's Spirit*, as Darknes is to Light,  
 who tells us, that *he who provides not for his own,*  
*cc. is worse than an Infidel;* and should not eat.  
 Is the publishing their Experiences, and per-  
 etually extolling their Success in causing People  
 to weep and fall down, and magnifying their  
 Righteousness, (which, if we judge as we would  
 in other Cases, where we would not be deceived,  
 is what we must for ordinary understand by their  
 Experiences) and condemning others, from God's  
 spirit? Does it not look more like that Spirit our  
 Saviour condemns so severely? That 'spiritual  
 Pride that moves Men to make a public Show of  
 what is commendable, and to want to be esteem-  
 ed holier than other Men; *sounding Trumpets be-*  
*fore them when they give Alms, or pray, disfigur-*  
*ing their Countenances, and hanging down their*  
*heads like Bulrushes,* putting on demure Looks  
 to attain the Applause of Men; if 'tis real, why  
 not inward, *the hidden Man of the Heart, that*  
*vaunteth not itself, speaketh no Evil?* How lively  
 is this Spirit described by our Saviour, in his Pa-  
 rable, *Luke xviii. 9, 10, 11. And he spake this*  
*Parable unto certain which trusted in themselves*  
*that they were righteous, and despised others: Two*  
*Men went up into the Temple to pray; the one a Pha-*  
*risee, and the other a Publican. The Pharisee stood*  
*and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee,*  
*that I am not as other Men are, Extortioners, Un-*  
*clean, Adulterers, or even as this Publican. How*  
 like the Language of many in our Days, who  
 thank

thank God, that they are not like other Men whom they represent as in a carnal and natural *i. e.* a damnable State? The *Publican* cries in Humility, *God be merciful to me a Sinner.*

Our Saviour's Decision of this Matter, shew us, whether the Self-righteous, the Confident and Despisers of others, or the humble and fearful will be most acceptable to God. *I say unto you, that Man went down into his House justified rather than the other.* With such Persons the Apostle durst not compare himself, 2 Cor. x. 12, *We dare not make ourselves of the Number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves. But they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.* And, again, *Not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.* How far are such from taking the wise Man's Advice, to let another, and not their own Mouth commend them?

Is the despising of Morality, and speaking contemptibly of all such as esteem it, calling such Preachers as are for recommending a holy Life and godly Practice, by way of Contempt, legal or moral Preachers, from the divine Spirit? What poor Notions must such have of Christianity, who talk at this rate? Despising what is the Glory of Christianity, the Perfection of the divine Nature, and the very Image of God in the Soul without which no Man can be happy here. No indeed, if God would admit a wicked Person into Heaven, could they enjoy any Happiness there, without resembling God in these imitable Perfections. This is despising Christianity, the Sum of which as well as the Law, is *Love to God and Mankind* like the *Pharisees* of old, despising the weighty



atters of the Law, Judgment, Righteousness and  
ce, and speaking lightly of pure and undefiled  
igion. 'Tis contemning of what our Saviour  
s us, *shall never be abolished, tho' Heaven and  
rth may.* How would such Persons treat our  
viour were he upon Earth? Why, worse, in  
ne respects than the *Jews* of old did, for they  
ould not suffer him to teach in their Churches;  
if he taught as in the Gospels, his Sermons  
ould be dull and dry Lectures of Morality.  
ow meanly may such Persons think of our Sa-  
our's never to be equalled Sermon on the  
ount? For who knows not that 'tis taken up in  
plaining and enforcing what is the Dignity,  
erfection, and Happiness of the humane Na-  
re, the sublime Principles of Holiness and Pu-  
y, or true Christian Morality? And for the  
ne Reason must our Saviour's Design of com-  
g into the World, and giving himself for us,  
made light of; for *he came to destroy the Works  
the Devil, to redeem us from Iniquity, and purify  
a peculiar People, zealous of good Works:* And  
Grace be opposed, which appeared to *teach us  
deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and live  
righteously, soberly, and godly in this World.*  
Is that Spirit from God, that makes Men for  
evelations and heavenly Visions, take deluded  
maginations? Imagination is indeed a natural  
wer of our Minds; but when not governed by  
eason, 'tis the most delusory Thing in Nature,  
pecially in Religion, leading Men to say and  
as well as believe the most absurd Things;  
d to bring a Man to believe that God uses this  
a Means of converting weak Minds, will re-  
ire a strange Proof; because it would repre-  
sent

sent God as using Deceit to inform. That Spirit therefore that begins with, or works most upon the Imagination, is only an imaginary Spirit; God; and such as depend upon such a Thing, may allow to be but imaginary Christians, Converts, and Children of God.

Is exceeding great Terror for the Consequence of Sin, and sudden Chearfulness succeeding in short Time, sufficient Evidence for Men to found the Certainty of their being in a State of Favor with God upon? Who has not seen Numbers Yesterday's Converts, talking boldly of their Experiences and Assurance, and in a few Days doing such Things as are a Scandal to Humanity, well as our holy Religion; giving Occasion to such as seek Occasion to *blaspheme that sacred Name by which we are all called?* 'Tis, no doubt true, that the Wickedness and Apostacy of some proves not that others will apostatise; but plainly proves, that such Things as all that call themselves Converts, enjoy in common, are poor Grounds for Men to build the Certainty of Salvation upon. Does not our Saviour tell us, that *say, Lord, Lord*, will be a vain Plea before God if we do not his Will? And what will the Enquiry be about at the Day of Judgment? Will it be about *feeding the Hungry, cloathing the Naked &c.* The doing these Things is the *for*, why some Persons shall be admitted into Heaven, and the Reverse the *for*, why Men shall be cast into Hell. *Matthew xxv. &c.*

Does the divine Spirit render every Thing communicates to the humane Mind, equally certain with self-evident Truths, or mathematical Demonstration? How ignorant and wicked the

as Gideon of old, when nothing less than two directly opposite Miracles would satisfy him that God would fulfil his Promise?

Who knows not that there are different Ways of communicating Truth to the humane Mind, and different Degrees of Evidence attending the different Ways of Communication? There are self-evident, demonstrative, and probable Truths, Truths founded upon moral Certainty and Testimony, the two first of which have the strongest Evidence; for no sooner is the Language and Connection understood, but Men are necessitated to assent. But is a peculiar Warmth of Devotion at some Times, sufficient to render Men as certain of their being in a State of Favour with God, as they may be of the above Truths? Let each look into our Saviour's Parable of the Seed sown, and *Heb. vi.* and sure they will be convinced, that Men may be high in their own Opinion, obtain great Gifts, taste the good Word of God, and the Powers of the World to come, have great Feelings of Joy and Comfort, yea, receive the Holy Ghost, and yet fall away. Is it not therefore imprudent to make what Apostates may have, an Evidence of Conversion and God's Favour?

I know 'tis said, the Marks of a true Spirit mentioned in this Chapter, are to be found among the Subjects of this Work in general: Men are said to be convinced of Truth; particularly, that the Scriptures are of divine Original; that Christ is the Son of God, and Saviour of Sinners; that there is a God who hates Sin, to whom we must give an account, &c. These are Doctrines that all professed Christians own for Truth; but such as are the Subjects of this Work, are said to believe

these Things more distinctly and clearly; how? Have they had immediate Revelations such Things? No; this is not pretended: Do they receive them by the common Way of attaining such Truths under the ordinary Influences of the divine Spirit? This requires Reasoning and Study, close Care and Application, use of Helps, and Time, which is not the Way such pretend to obtain this Knowledge: Nor is there any other Way of obtaining Information in Religion. And indeed agreeable to their Knowledge, such is their Reasoning, proving by Assertions, confuting hard Names; so that they generally suppose Things to be true, without any Proof. But perhaps we are not to enquire how we came by such Things, but thank God we have them; *i. e.* we are to thank God that we believe Truth, before we know whether we believe Truth or Error. And indeed superior Holiness is as far from them as superior Knowledge. Their less Esteem of the Pleasures, Profits and Honours of this World wants Proof. Do not even the greatest Heretics of the Scheme dress as gay, and love Money as well as others? And some going slovenly, and leaving off Labour, is no Evidence of despising the World in any other than a vicious Sense. And who so fond of Honour and Applause? And they not always magnifying one another, or themselves, boasting of the Numbers they can bring into their Scheme, calling it, *bringing them home to Christ*? And is it not self-evident there is no other Love to Men among them, but a mere Counterfeit, such as may be found among Pirates, Robbers, Publicans and Sinners? A disinterested Love to Enemies being what they are void of;



are Evidence they are not the Children of our  
Father which is in Heaven. 'Tis therefore no  
more than a Pretence that such Things are among  
them, great boasting empty Words of superior  
Sense and Knowledge, Purity and Charity. But  
we are told, Drunkards are become sober, pro-  
fane Persons and Swearers use God's Name with  
Reverence, &c. But are such totally reformed?  
Are they free from the common Vice of God's  
dear Children, uncharitable and rash judging of  
others? Is not this their very Element? And is  
such a Conversion any thing more than a Con-  
version from bad to bad, or worse? And is it not  
certain such are not God's Children? For *whoso-  
ever keeps the whole Law, and yet offends in one  
point, is guilty of all*, James ii. 10.

That Spirit therefore that unqualifies Persons to  
receive Information, that begins with the Imagi-  
nation or Passions, that uses not the Way to pro-  
mote Religion our Saviour and his Apostles did,  
that influences Men to take Imagination for Reve-  
lation, and Delusions of Fancy for heavenly Vi-  
sions; that despises the Understanding, would  
make Religion and Reason opposite, makes Men  
rash Judgers, Confiners of divine Operations to  
themselves and Friends; that leads them to en-  
deavour Divisions among Christian People, be-  
tween them and their Pastors, that despises what  
our Saviour has made necessary, *viz.* Morality;  
that lays a Stress upon Tears and bodily Gestures;  
that destroys *Reason*, the *Candle of the Lord*, and  
excludes that from Conversion, without which  
there can be no Religion; that would destroy the  
difference between Good and Evil, Truth and  
Falshood; that would reconcile God and the De-  
vil;

vil; that leads Men to do what our Saviour declares he will condemn Men for, and yet he calls for his Favour, and call themselves, and be led by others, the dear Children of God: that makes *that* its chief Work which God has declared his strange Work; that makes Men believe that they are converted, who are governed by Passion, Appetite, or Ignorance; that despises Learning and Sense; that influences Men to assume more than our Saviour did, the judging such as believe them not, that needs some By-standers to instruct the Subjects of its Operations often how to express they know not what; that endeavours to amaze weak Persons, and ruin the Characters of such as are not of their Opinion, (which 'tis self-evident is the Fruit of that Spirit now at work in this Part of the World) is not, nay, impossible it should be from God.

Thus have I endeavoured to set this Matter in a just and true Light, without Regard to the Favour or Contempt of Man; studying only to deliver for Truth what appears to me so; yet would I not have any Person from what I have said, look upon Tears or Warmths in Devotion to be criminal in themselves, or Evidences of Deceit. No, the latter, at least, is highly approveable, but no Evidence to found the Certainty of God's Favour upon. Nor would I have any good Man despair of finding sufficient Evidence even in this Life, that they are in a State of Favour with God, and will, through Christ, be accepted in his Sight. There is a certain and infallible Way by which we may know how our State stands with respect to the divine Favour; which, if your Patience will continue, I shall now proceed and give you

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ou a brief View of. And this is none other but  
sober, religious, godly Practice, by imitating  
God in his moral Perfections, by keeping all our  
passions and Desires in Subordination to Reason  
and Conscience, informed by God's Word ; by do-  
ing what God requires, Justice, Mercy and Hu-  
mility ; by sincerely studying to obey God, imi-  
tating our divine Redeemer, and practising every  
grace that is by Jesus Christ to the Glory of God.  
This was our Saviour's Rule to judge of Men by,  
their *Fruits* ; because *Men cannot gather Grapes of  
Thistles, or Figs of Thorns.* And Paul tells us, 1 Cor.  
iii. That a Man may have Faith of the miraculous  
kind, the Knowledge of all Mysteries, give all  
his Substance in Alms, and willingly suffer Mar-  
tyrdom for his Principles, and yet want the Tem-  
per of Mind necessary to recommend him to  
God, yea, be nothing in God's Sight ; called by  
the Apostle, *Charity*, and beautifully described  
from the 5th Verse. *John* also gives a Rule, by  
which we may distinguish the Children of God  
from all others, in the Chapter preceeding my  
text, and is, the avoiding all Sin, and endeavour-  
ing universal Righteousness, Verse 7, 8, 9. *Let  
no Man deceive you ; he that doth Righteousness is  
righteous, even as he is righteous ; he that commiteth  
sin, i. e. who habitually indulges himself in any  
practice God condemns, is of the Devil. He that  
is born of God, cannot sin.* The Meaning of which  
is, not that 'tis absolutely impossible for him to  
do a sinful Action ; for if so, there would be no-  
thing approveable in abstaining from Evil. Nor  
the Meaning, as some would have us believe,  
that if he do such Actions as are sinful in them-  
selves, or would be Sins in others, that they will  
be

be none in him : This would be to encourage  
 contrary to the Design of Saviour's Doctrine,  
 ample and Death. But the Meaning is, that  
 continued, wilful Violation of God's Law,  
 but in one Instance, is what no Man that is b  
 of God will allow himself in; and he that d  
 so, is no Child of God. So he tells us, Verse  
*He that doth not Righteousness is not of God,*  
*ther he that loveth not his Brother.* And, Verse  
 he gives us to understand how Men may kn  
 that we are passed from Death to Life, very  
 ferent from that now in Fashion, viz. loving  
*Brethren.* I know, indeed, that some conf  
 Brother in Religion, to such as are of their C  
 nion about Conversion, and with the *Jews* or  
*blicans*, or a Set of Pirates, they despise the  
 of Mankind, fancying that by loving such, t  
 fulfil this noble Duty, and are possessed of  
 divine Temper. But is it possible for any un  
 judiced Mind to conclude, that our Saviour or  
 Apostles intended to confine our Love to  
 Sect? Will it not be allowed, that when we  
 enjoined to *love our Neighbour as ourselves*, t  
 the Person for whom we are to have so strong  
 Affection, is the same with him who is elsewh  
 stiled our Brother? Now, who our Neighbour  
 our Saviour has told us in the Parable of the M  
 robbed and wounded, and overlooked in his l  
 streßs by a *Priest* and a *Levite*, but taken to an I  
 by one of another Nation, (between whom a  
 the *Jews* there was no Communion, because  
 Differences in Religion) and treated with Hum  
 nity and Friendship. And in his incomparab  
 Sermon, he tells us, to love them that love us, is  
 do no more than Sinners, and that Love even

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emies is necessary to constitute us God's Children. Instead therefore of confining the Affections of Benevolence and Charity to one Sect, we are to *love and do Good to all, especially to the household of Faith.* I know also, that 'tis said in the last Verse of the preceeding Chapter, that *we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit he has given*; and also Verse 13th of this Chapter; but if we will compare this carefully with the whole Chapters, especially with the 10th Verse of this, *we love one another, God dwelleth in us:* and Verse 7. *Every one that loveth, is born of God;* we shall see that by the Spirit of God, we are to understand a divine and heavenly Temper, an Imitation of God in his Love and kind Affections to Mankind; for *he that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is Love,* Verse 8.

But again, 'tis certain that we can have no greater nor any other Evidence that we are converted, and shall be saved, than we have that we are possessed of those Graces or Vertues which are declared (by them who knew) to be necessary to Salvation; such as fearing God, and hoping in him; knowing him, and calling upon his Name; living and believing in God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. No Man that knows not that he hath these, can know he shall be saved: But how can we know that we fear God? Is it by a servile Subjection to, or falling down before him? This indeed is Fear, but of the slavish Kind, such as the most profligate of Mankind and Devils shall be constrained to pay him; but that Fear that is proveable, is such an affectionate Regard to God, as restrains from Sin, and influences to Obedience: Like a Son, who knows his Father to be

be tenderly concerned for his Happiness, ready to make all possible Allowance for Weakness, and therefore is the more fearful to offend him.

Hope, when it is a Vertue, can for that Reason only be supposed to be so, because the Foundation upon which 'tis built, is Obedience to God's Law; for the *Hope of an Hypocrite shall perish*.

How shall we know that we know God? Let us take the Rule given us by God, *1 John, ii. 2, 4. Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his Commandments. And he that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his Commandments, is a Liar.*

Our Obedience is the only Evidence of our Love to our Saviour. So he tells us, *Job xiv. 2. He that bath my Commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.* So the Apostle John, *Epist. v. 3.* says, *This is the Love of God, that we keep his Commandments;* and particularly the Love of our Fellow-Creatures. And if any Man say, *I love God, and hateth his Brother, he is a Liar;* for *this Commandment have we from God, that he who loveth God, love his Brother also.* Sudden Starts and Warmths of Devotion are poor Evicences to depend upon; but Obedience, sincere and universal, is the Scripture Foundation. Our Faith also can only be known to be saving by its Fruits, and numberless Passages of sacred Writ plainly evince. So we find it stiled, *The Obedience and Righteousness of Faith; Faith that worketh by Love; Faith and a good or pure Conscience, that overcometh the World; the Righteousness which is of God by Faith.* Which Passages are an evident Proof that Faith is always

always valued by its Effects of Righteousness and true Holiness. But yet to prevent all Possibility of mistaking, *James* speaks more clearly and plainly, Chap. ii. telling us, that we have as good reason to suppose Words can satisfy the Cravings of Appetite, or screen from the Intemperance of Weather, as Faith without the Fruits of Goodness, save a Man. Nay, do not even the Devils believe and tremble, without any Evidence of Grace or Divine Operations? and that such a Faith is like a Corpse; and to say, *Lord, Lord*, will be of no Use, says our Saviour, if we keep not God's Commandments.

How also shall we know that God loves us? says our Saviour, *Joh. xv. 9. If ye keep my Commandments, ye shall abide in my Love, and my Father shall love you.* So the Psalmist, *Psal. xi. The righteous Lord loveth Righteousness.* And indeed if we suppose the Divine Moral Character perfect, we shall be convinced from the little we have of the same, that God cannot love any thing but lovely Qualities. No Bribe can make us esteem a Person lovely, we know to be void of lovely Qualities; and may we not then rest satisfied that God will only approve such, who is infinitely superior to us? And is it not evident that Righteousness in its full Extent and Latitude is the only amiable Quality.

Well then, if *Fear, Hope, Love, Faith, the knowing and calling upon God*, be necessary to our obtaining the Divine Favour; and if we cannot know that we are in a State of Favour with God, but by knowing we have these; and if we cannot know that we have these but by knowing we obey God's Laws sincerely and universally; does

It not then manifestly follow, that by a Life Holiness and true Purity, by keeping our Passions and Desires under the Government of a well informed Reason and Conscience, that we sin wilfully and habitually, we can only know that we are God's Children, and shall be saved?

Let me now conclude with some Inferences from what has been said.

I. From what has been said, we may be convinced, that 'tis our Interest, if we would avoid Imposition, to be cautious what we believe in Religion. If you have been careful and unprejudiced in your Examinations, you cannot fail to have observed many Persons talking boldly in the Name of the Lord, and not offering more Support of what they teach, but their own or Party's Opinion; nor are any so apt to give harsh Names, such as *Heretick, Teachers of damnable Doctrine, &c.* yea, to sentence to eternal Misery, as those who have the least by way of Argument to support their Schemes with. The *Romish Catholics* damn as heretical all *Protestants*, proving *their* Doctrines true, by their evil Nature and themselves the only Christians, by opposing Christianity. The same Arguments also some *Protestants* use to prove their Schemes true, and themselves God's Children. But when Men are convinced upon a rational Foundation, that the Doctrines are true, and agreeable to the written Word of God, they will be pleased to see them canvassed, and impartially examined: They will be ready to render a Reason to every one that asks them of the Hope that is in them; opposing Error by Argument, and with rational Methods.



endeavour to bring Men to the Knowledge of the Truth. But when Men turn passionate and incapable of bearing Contradiction in Opinion, and run out into Names of Reproach, *they are proud, knowing nothing*; either the Cause is bad or they are weak, or both. Such also as are not for looking into, nor suffering others to look into the Opinions of such as differ from them, seem different of their Cause, and oppose the Apostle's Advice, *1 Thes. v. 21*. This tends also to promote Bigotry and Uncharitableness. And must not such as are for compelling us to believe all they say, or calling us unregenerate, and blind, and tell us we must first be of their Way of thinking, before we can believe them, be conscious, their Cause is not defendable? We ought therefore to be the more cautious, and more suspect such of Design to impose upon us, because their Conduct betrays them.

II. From what has been said, we may see and admire the Goodness of God to Mankind, in not leaving them in such critical Junctures of Affairs, to be guided by Fancy, nor run at every one's call, tossed to and fro with every Wind of Doctrine. We have a Rule to which (if we are not fully negligent) we will bring all that Men teach us, and try the same thereby. Let us not despise the Divine Goodness, by believing implicitly all that Men teach in Religion: Let us not give up our Rationality; nor professing to be *Protestants*, have only the Name; but let us improve our Talents, lest God sentence us to the state of the slothful Servant. For tho' Errors in speculation and complex Cases are unavoidable,

and so will by God, through Jesus Christ, be o  
looked in an impartial Enquirer; yet I ques  
not but Sloth and Neglect of Enquiry will  
deemed a greater Crime than many are aware  
And if 'tis a Crime of a deep Dye, what will  
Case of Numbers be, who have no more to say  
their being Christians, but their Fathers and a  
of Men believed it was so, and therefore it is

III. From what has been said we may also  
that 'tis no such Crime as some would have  
believe, to look upon and plainly declare, t  
this Work has not the Character of a Worl  
God; why then should Men, especially M  
sters, be afraid to speak their Minds? Shall s  
as are set apart to be Watchmen, sit still and h  
Men zealously endeavouring to perswade  
World, that the Divine Spirit and a Spirit  
Error, Divine Impressions and diabolical De  
sions may be consistent? That Men may be  
Children, yea, dear Children of God, who  
going on in such Practices as God has assured  
he will condemn Men for? Let not Prudence s  
the Mouths of any: That I'm afraid, is no m  
than a Cheat, a preferring worldly Interest  
God and a good Conscience. Be not afraid  
being thought guilty of Blasphemy: This is  
more than the common Cry of such as in all Ag  
have had more Impudence than Sense, where  
they would scare unthinking Persons into the  
Way, and keep Men of Sense from leaving the  
Let not such powerful Arguments as *I think, I*  
*afraid, I believe, and I verily believe*, hinder us fro  
thinking and believing for ourselves. Will G  
deem it Blasphemy for Men to say, that such Thing

destroy the Difference between Good and Evil, present him as approving what we know he hates, and overlooking what he declares he will condemn, are not from his Spirit? Nor let us sit down with the Argument of the Pharisee, *If it is not of God, it will come to nothing, and if it is, we cannot overthrow it, &c. Acts v. 38, 39.* This is only the Language of a fallible Man, and a very false Way of Reasoning: For, according to the same, *Heathenism* is most approved by God, next *Mahometism*, then *Popery*. How long have these been in the World, and yet are not come to Work? Are they therefore from God? And is any Man who says any Thing against them, a Foe-fighter against God? Let not therefore such common Place Talk as will prove all Doctrines equal-good, have any Influence upon our Minds. Let us therefore without Fear oppose Error; especially *Antinomianism* and *Popery*, which to me it appears manifest are now blending together, and overspreading the World. Let us approve ourselves to God, tho' Men should condemn us; and condemn the Favour of Men, when in Competition with the Favour of God.

IV. Let me endeavour to perswade you all to be cautious of your Confidence, in thinking yourselves God's Children and peculiar Favourites. Fancy not yourselves to be something, whilst you are nothing, deceiving yourselves: For surely there are Mistakes about Man's spiritual State, some being clean in their own Eyes, who are not purified from their Filthiness. Take heed therefore that the Light that is in you be not Darkness. Think not yourselves rich and increased with Goods, whilst you are

are poor, miserable, blind and naked. Commend not yourselves, justify not yourselves, for God knoweth your Hearts; and that which is highly esteemed among Men, is an Abomination in God's Sight.

Found not your Evidences of Conversion upon sudden Starts and Warmths in Devotion; but rely upon spiritual Pride and Uncharitableness, nor fancy that God will regard you, let your Warmth or Zeal ever be so great, if you are Workers of Iniquity. You must not sin against any single Command of God wilfully and habitually, or you are not the Children of God. Build not your Hopes or Assurances of Heaven upon the Sand; remember what our Saviour said upon this Head, *He that heareth my Words and doeth them not, shall be likened to a foolish Man who built his House upon the Sand, and the Storm came, and Wind blew, and beat upon that House, and it fell, because it was built upon the Sand.* i. e. The hearing but not doing the Will of God. *He that hears and does, builds upon a Rock, against which Storms nor Wind shall not prevail.* James tells us, that *he who is a Hearer, but not a Doer of God's Word, deceives himself: He is like a Man who beholding himself in a Glass, goes away and forgets what Manner of Man he was.*

Found therefore your Certainty of Heaven upon what was Paul's Ground of rejoicing, and let that be yours, *that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity, not with fleshly Wisdom, but by the Grace of God, you have had your Conversation in the World; that you have sought a good Fight, and finished your Course.* See that you are redeemed by Christ from Iniquity, before you hope to be redeemed from the Wrath to come.



*A Trial of the present Spirit.*

47

Consider all Pleas will be vain, if you are  
Workers of Iniquity: *Depart*, will be the Sen-  
tence, *I know you not*. Be persuaded therefore to  
make your *Calling and Election sure*; by the Apo-  
le's Rule, adding to your *Faith, Virtue, Know-*  
*ledge, Temperance, Patience, Godliness, Brotherly-*  
*kindness, and Charity*. For if you do these Things,  
shall never fall, but an Entrance shall be admi-  
stred to you into the Kingdom of our Lord and  
our Saviour Jesus Christ; where Sin and Sorrow shall  
be no more; where everlasting Love shall be our  
employment, and everlasting Peace our Reward:  
unto which Kingdom that we may all, through  
our Redeemer, be admitted, is and ever shall be  
our earnest Prayer to God, through Jesus Christ.

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